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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505



DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

10 October 1985

UNESCO: One Year After the US Departure

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Summary

One year after the US withdrawal from UNESCO, we see -- as most observers expected -- that the organization is not making any serious effort to deal with the problems which led to the US departure.

- o The Executive Board has proposed only minimal management reforms;
- o Director General M'Bow of Senegal is attempting to lay the ground work for reelection to a third term beginning in 1987;
- o The Soviets are continuing to exploit UNESCO programs for political and intelligence purposes. Moreover, they have taken advantage of the US departure to try to expand their own personnel quota in the UNESCO Secretariat and curry favor with the dominant G-77 bloc.

The one exception to business as usual is the harassment of US personnel in the Secretariat. Openly encouraged by the Soviets, M'Bow has launched a campaign to purge selected US nationals, which has to date resulted in several departures and an attempt to terminate the contract of a senior US Secretariat official.

We expect that, with little interest in reform, the UNESCO General Conference meeting in Sofia this month will approve the minor changes that the Board has proposed. We do not expect

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This memorandum was prepared by analysts in the Subversion Analysis Branch, Office of Global Issues. Information available as of 9 October 1985 has been used. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Foreign Subversion and Instability Center, on 25X1

GI M 85-10271

Britain to withdraw unless Prime Minister Thatcher overrules the Foreign Office. We also expect that M'Bow will continue to reduce the number of US personnel through attrition and that the Soviets will continue to exploit personnel shifts and reorganizations to enhance their position in UNESCO. Since M'Bow interviews each professional candidate, we believe that the 340 new UNESCO staff hired since January 1984 could very well provide him with a new power base within the organization.

UNESCO: One Year After the US DepartureNo Real Management Reform

In the wake of the US departure, UNESCO -- as most observers expected -- is pursuing only minimal managerial changes. Last year the United States proposed several constitutional and administrative reforms -- including a recommendation that the Executive Board act as a board of directors capable of meaningful budget review, direct tasking of external auditors, and review of personnel practices. To date, the G-77 majority on the Board has evidenced little interest in reform, agreeing to follow M'Bow's lead and to adopt only cosmetic changes in the organization's management, according to US Mission reporting. The July Executive Board meeting adopted the following changes, subject to the approval of the General Conference meeting this month in Sofia:

- o A 1986-1987 zero growth budget in the face of the 25 percent revenue shortfall resulting from the US departure.
- o Some reduction in funding for disarmament studies.
- o A central evaluation unit in the Secretariat for program review.
- o Stylistic changes in budget presentation.

At the September Executive Board meeting, the board rejected direct tasking of external auditors. [REDACTED]

In our judgment, interest in reform has dwindled principally because the dominant G-77 bloc very quickly reached a limit on the concessions it was willing to make to keep the door open for the United States to return. The reform movement was also weakened by the split within the Western group between the French and the British over how much reform is needed. [REDACTED]

M'Bow's Reelection Campaign

M'Bow, who has a significant following in the G-77, has reasserted his activist role in the Executive Board since the US departed, and is trying to lay the groundwork for reelection in 1987 in order to vindicate his management of UNESCO. He is moving toward reelection despite criticism of his competence by several West European and Middle Eastern delegations. According to the US Mission, he has attempted to reinvigorate his African constituency by encouraging Africans to seek positions on the Executive Board. This campaign may already be producing results: at the September Board meeting, the G-77 pushed a resolution praising M'Bow's leadership. Moreover, M'Bow has allowed 340 new UNESCO personnel to be hired since January 1984. In light

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of M'Bow's highly personalistic style of leadership which includes interviewing each professional candidate, we expect him to try to use this pool of staff to help him stay in power.

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Purge of US Personnel

The drive to purge the UNESCO Secretariat of Americans began immediately after the US withdrawal. On 7 January 1985, the Director of the Bureau of Personnel, who is M'Bow's son-in-law, asked his Soviet administrative officer to prepare a comprehensive list of all US staff employees giving the expiration dates of their contracts, according to the US Mission.

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Since then the situation of US personnel in UNESCO has become increasingly tenuous.

- o As of April 1985, 37 of the 81 American professionals employed in UNESCO positions under the US quota had their contracts up for renewal this year. Only 12 of these professionals have had their contracts renewed; four US nationals have retired, three have resigned, three are in positions to be abolished, and two have been terminated, with the remaining cases yet to be decided.
- o The position of Americans in the Education Sector, headed by Soviet Associate Director General Tanguiane, is unfavorable. One program officer and one program specialist have already been terminated, and another's contract was renewed until later this year when knowledgeable sources expect it to lapse. M'Bow and Tanguiane have initiated actions to remove the US Director of the International Bureau of Education, and the State Department believes he will be forced out at the end of his contract period.
- o At the September meeting, the Executive Board adopted a resolution that this month's conference in Sofia address the question of staff reductions and contract renewals among the nationals of nonmember states. This Algerian-sponsored resolution is being variously interpreted by the US Mission as either a G-77 effort to dismiss US personnel or as a warning to the UK and other countries that their nationals are hostage to continued participation in UNESCO.

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Soviet Strategy and Tactics

In our judgment, Moscow's overall strategy has been to exploit the US departure to strengthen its position in UNESCO while working to maintain the intelligence and political benefits that it has long enjoyed. This strategy is particularly apparent in concerted Soviet efforts to exploit the personnel issue.

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Soviet Ambassador Yermelenko has, for over a year, strenuously argued for dismissal of American staff, referring to them as "stateless persons." The Soviets also continue to suggest that US personnel are expensive -- UNESCO reimburses them for US income taxes and many hold high-level positions -- and that a useful contribution to UNESCO's deficit reduction plans would be to dismiss American personnel, according to US Mission reporting.

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We believe that the Soviet objectives in exploiting the US personnel issue are, at a minimum, to avoid dismissals of Soviet staff during the inevitable staff reductions to be caused by the loss of one-quarter of the budget and, if possible, even make gains in the number of Soviet staff in UNESCO. Ambassador Yermelenko has pointed out that the USSR is now UNESCO's largest donor and therefore should have a larger personnel quota.

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In our judgment, the Soviets are having some successes on the personnel front. This year they captured a key post in the Development of External Relations Sector when a Soviet arrived in July to become Director of the Fellowships Division. In this position, he will review applicant files, meet with young Third World leaders, and negotiate with Third World governments over a program that during 1981-1983 awarded 900 fellowships.

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The Soviets have also exploited the US departure to score political points with the G-77 representatives. While the Soviets have privately told the US Observer Mission that they want a well-run organization and would be opposed to a third term for M'Bow, they have lobbied vigorously in the Executive Board to make no changes in the current program, much of which has been shaped by M'Bow. Moreover, Shevardnadze made a point of visiting M'Bow during Gorbachev's recent visit to Paris, and Gorbachev plans to address the Sofia Conference this month.

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The Soviets have participated in harsh public attacks on the US withdrawal. Soviet Ambassador Yermelenko, Moscow's delegate to the Executive Board, has at all of the Board meetings this year suggested that the United States should be denied observer status and that it should pay its 1985 dues since UNESCO operates financially on a biennium basis. The resident Soviet Ambassador, Khilchevski, suggested earlier this year that observer status be linked to payment of these alleged financial obligations. At the September meeting, the Board forwarded to the Sofia Conference a recommendation that US observer status be reexamined and that the Conference consider seeking an advisory opinion from the World Court on the financial obligations of a state that withdraws in the middle of a biennium.

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While trying to capitalize on the US departure, Moscow continues to take advantage of UNESCO in various ways.

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- o After the US withdrawal, the Indian affiliate of the International Organization of Journalists, a Soviet front, demanded that news agencies -- such as AP and Reuters -- from countries withdrawing from UNESCO be denied access to the Indian news market, according to the US Embassy.
- o The Soviets have submitted two resolutions to the Sofia conference proposing more immediate implementation of the New World Information and Communications Order, which seeks restrictions on Western news media.
- o We believe Moscow will exploit its participation in the UNESCO program for mapping the bottom of the Western Indian Ocean.

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Outlook

With its G-77 majority, the Sofia conference almost certainly will approve only the minimal "reforms" adopted by the Executive Board. The British delegation to the Governing Board and a Parliamentary Committee have both welcomed these reforms, so that it appears Britain will not withdraw unless the Prime Minister intervenes.

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Judging by actions to date on US employee contracts, M'Bow will not terminate all US personnel precipitately, but will allow attrition to take its course in an atmosphere of staff reduction. We believe the Soviets will continue to exploit opportunities to place more of their own people in the Secretariat as vacancies and reorganizations occur while continuing to manipulate UNESCO programs to their advantage.

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